



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company: Cas Public at New Territories (New Moves International Ltd)

Venue: Tramway

Title of Event: Suites Cruelles

Type of Event: dance performance

Date of Visit: 21 March 2009

Overall Rating: 5: Excellent

This production by Cas Public, the Quebec based company of choreographer Helene Blackburn, provided a suitably celebratory statement for the finale of *New Territories 2009*. The production, *Suites Cruelles* is a fast, frantic and passionate dance work for nine dancers and two pianists and presented a fine continuation of the commitment to new choreography from Quebec that the festival has championed over many years.

There was a good sized audience for the performance as would be expected for such a renowned international company. Overall the programme for *New Territories 2009* provided a strong mix of introducing new work to Scottish audiences, and with a particular focus this year on renewing connections with companies who have previously performed at the festival (such as the Sylvain Emard retrospective and the two companion works from Companhia Paulo Ribeiro). I do think that there is an opportunity for *New Territories* to look afresh at its approach to PR and marketing, to ensure that highest profile for this festival of innovative, international performance.

Name: Anita Clark Date: 6/05/2009

Scottish Arts Council Officer

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

- 1 - **Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2 - **Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3 - **Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4 - **Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5 - **Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	5	<p><i>Suites Cruelles</i> is a fast, frantic and passionate dance work for nine dancers and two pianists. It is dynamic and physical work, teetering with balance, and weaving duets and group segments, with live music and video projections. The themes explored include pain and exertion, pushing the body to its physical limits in search of pleasure.</p> <p>It continued the technically charged and intricate choreographic vocabulary that I have seen in the company's previous work, although most recently it has been their work for children I have experienced which has a stronger narrative thread.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	5	<p><i>New Territories</i> has an established relationship with choreographer Helene Blackburn and her company Cas Public. The brochure noted the company last performed in Glasgow in 1999, and my memory is that the company was presented at a number of New Territories/ New Moves festivals throughout the 1990s. The festival has established a strong connection with Quebequois dance over the years, providing Scottish audiences and artists with wonderful opportunities to experience the innovative work being created.</p> <p><i>Suites Cruelles</i> provided a celebratory statement for the finale of New Territories 2009.</p> <p>As the company is returning to Scotland in May it would have been beneficial to highlight this to audiences and for the programmers to consider collaborative approaches to promoting this.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>	5	<p>The New Territories festival noted that Cas Public is now in its 19th year and that <i>'each of the creations that have marked its development attest to the pursuit of excellence and the renewal of gestural codes'</i> and <i>Suites Cruelles</i> is described as, <i>'Incandescence. Beings passionately search for one another, their vacant expressions mirroring the pain inside the bodies'</i></p> <p>The work was excellent, well conceived and executed to a high standard. It was strong addition to the New Territories programme and a fine continuation of the commitment to new choreography from Quebec that the festival has championed over many years.</p>

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	5	<p>The company included nine dancers and two pianists who were integral to the overall production. Overall it appeared a young company; the dancers were all versatile artists with strong technical abilities and energetic performance qualities. The pianists were able performers who appeared to be comfortable with their prominent on stage presence.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>	5	<p>Choreographically, the work is informed by classical technique, athletic movement and intricate gestural sequences. Duets were highly-charged and physical, making use of high extensions and bodies teetering off balance and females on pointe, but with equal strength from both male and female partners. There are moments of humour throughout the work that resonated well with the audience.</p>
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>	3	<p>It is noted in the programme that the texts for <i>Suites Cruelles</i> were chosen by the choreographer and dancers and are extracted from Fredric Nietzsche, Chantel Thomas, David Le Breton, Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. While these were obviously selected to emphasis the artistic themes, I did not feel the text provided any further insight or than was being explored choreographically.</p>
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>	5	<p>In the programme it is noted that the choreography was created by Helene Blackburn with the ‘dancers’ precious collaboration’. This collaboration ensured a confidence and assured physicality in the work. I was particularly impressed with the pianists as not all musicians would be so comfortable taking on the performative aspects demanded by this production.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.</p>	5	<p>Music was integral to the production with two pianists playing live during the piece and very much utilised as performers throughout, and one of the dancers taking to the drum kit towards the end of the piece. The choice of music was considered and reflected the work well, from the cheekily entertaining opening to Nancy Sinatra’s ‘<i>These Boots are Made for Walking</i>’. Additional sound was from effects linked with the physicality of the work and triggered by the dancers’ bodies on the floor.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>	4	<p>Design was simple and stark – black, sparse costuming putting the emphasis on the dancers’ physicality. The stage was set with the grand piano and the drum kit with the live video projections, augmenting the overall design. There was a rawness to this which worked, particularly with the video projections on the bare wall with lighting used effectively.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	5	<p>The show included some complex technical presentation including live video projections, live and recorded sound. Technical presentation and production values were excellent throughout.</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		<p>There was a good sized audience for this production. I attended most of the performances in the <i>New Territories 2009</i> programme and the audiences for the final weekend (Sylvian Emard's Wave and this production by Cas Public) attracted significantly higher audiences than the rest of the programme.</p> <p>There was a warm response to the work from the audience.</p>
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	-	<p>There was no interpretative activity specific to this performance, however, there were a number of meet the artists sessions throughout the Festival. Additionally, the extensive Winter School programme provides intensive professional development opportunities for artists.</p>
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>	-	N/A

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	Tramway is an important partner for New Territories and was the ideal venue for this production. Tramway 1 provides such a fantastic combination the scale and intimacy which was brilliant for <i>Suites Cruelles</i> .
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A simple, photocopied programme was distributed which contained credits for the production and some background to the creation of the work. It didn't, however, provide any further insight into the artists and the production that was in the festival brochure which would have been welcome. The website included information on all shows in the programme and film clips of some productions but I had trouble accessing some of these from various computers.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	Publicity was primarily through the festival brochure available in printed form or on CD-rom, and the website. I was also aware of printed flyers for the overall programme and e-flyers for specific productions. This is all similar to previous years and it feels that the festival's marketing and PR would benefit from some fresh thinking. <i>New Territories</i> takes place during a relatively quiet time in Glasgow's cultural calendar so there is the opportunity for the festivals to build its public profile, particularly through viral marketing approaches.
Ease of booking and payment	I booked all my tickets for <i>New Territories</i> events at Tramway over the phone with ease.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Tramway is outwith the city centre but it on train and bus routes
External signage and signposting	Tramway is sign posted from the main road and is a distinctive, is rather tired looking building.
Internal directional signage	The internal signage at Tramway has recently been overhauled and is much improved.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Tramway has good provision with level access to the main performance space and lift access to the other floors. The height of the bar and the reception desk maybe off putting for wheel-chair users.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance started at 8pm and lasted for approximately 60minutes.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The customer service front of house was proficient, however, after the performance there was a sense of a desire to usher people out of the venue rather than encouraging the audience to hang around in the bar. Particularly given that this was the final night of the Festival this felt unnecessarily abrupt and unwelcoming.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Yes, on festival brochure, programme and website.

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max 500 words. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.